



SANDRA SHEWRY
Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Services



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

March 17, 2005

DOM 05-02

TO: ALL DISTRICT MANAGERS/ADMINISTRATORS

**Subject: Information regarding R-01-04E: Licensed Nurse-to-Patient Ratio
Regulations following the March 14, 2005 California Superior Court Order**

On March 14, 2005, the California Superior Court enjoined enforcement of the emergency regulation pertaining to nurse-to-patient ratios, initially adopted by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) on November 12, 2004 (Rulemaking File R-01-04E). The order voids these emergency regulations, leaving the original ratio regulations in place. (Rulemaking File R-37-01).

The CDHS is appealing the decision and requesting that the Court of Appeal stay the court order. While CHDS believes that the emergency regulations will ultimately be upheld, in the meantime, the original nurse-to-patient ratio regulations (R-37-01) are in effect.

This means that, immediately:

- The minimum licensed nurse-to-patient ratio in medical, surgical, medical/surgical, and mixed units is changed from 1:6 to 1:5.
- Hospital emergency departments (EDs) must comply with the same requirements for nurses' assignments as all other units. They must document the assignment of the specific nurses to specific patients.

As a reminder, the only flexibility for any hospital unit, including the ED, will be in the event of a "healthcare emergency" as defined at 22 CCR 70217(q). Further, the ratios must be maintained "at all times."

We have also sent out All Facilities Letter #05- 04 via blast FAX to all general acute care hospitals explaining these changes.

DOM 05-02
Page 2
March 17, 2005

The regulations are available at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/lnc/ntp/default.htm>. They are referred to as "Regulations Effective January 1, 2004" and are listed at the second bullet. The Emergency Regulations, enjoined by the court, are available at the same website at the first bullet, "Approved Emergency Regulations Effective November 12, 2004".

CDHS understands that these changes, and the speed with which they must be implemented, may be difficult for your offices and your staff. However, the court's order must be obeyed by facilities and enforced by CDHS.

Please reactivate the reporting system that we began to use in January 2004, to track the impact of these changes by centrally collecting data. This includes sending the complaints, along with their resolution documented on a 2567, all requests for program flexibility and rural hospital waivers, along with your recommended response, to headquarters.

Thank you for your professionalism and your flexibility. We will keep you informed of all developments as these regulations are judicially reviewed. If you have any questions or concerns that you would like to discuss about this matter, please contact Gina Henning at (916) 552-9370.

Sincerely,

**Original Signed by
Brenda G. Klutz**

Brenda G. Klutz
Deputy Director